

CAMP NETWORK GROUP



ATHENS CAMP REPORT 2026/1

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WHO ARE WE?

The Camp Network Group is an informal network of grassroots organizations and individuals working in solidarity with people forced to live in isolated refugee camps (*Ελεγχόμενη Δομή Προσωρινής Φιλοξενίας Αιτούντων - Controlled Access Facility for Temporary Accommodation of Asylum Seekers*) around Athens and all over Greece.

We believe that refugee camps are inhumane, degrading and unnecessary.

They violate people's human rights and freedom of movement by hindering access to basic services and enforcing control and isolation instead of inclusion and support.

No one should be forced to live in these conditions.

The various nodes of this network regularly visit camps around Athens, each with their own modality and ethos, forming part of an increasingly small number of groups and organisations reaching these spaces.

For these reasons, we are now starting a reporting activity on the four camps we visit: Malakasa, Oinofyta, Thiva and Ritsona.

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INTRODUCTION

We are not researchers, and we don't visit camps with the specific purpose of extracting and accumulating data.

What is written in the following pages is intended as a way of sharing what we witness and what residents of the camps have been willing to share with us and with a wider audience.

This report seeks to cover, at least partially, "the informative black hole" the Greek reception system has been turned into. When little to no official data is published and reporting from inside camps is criminalized, no one will ever be held accountable for what happens within the Greek reception system.

Moreover, this report also aims at providing key information for people who seek to stand in solidarity with people living in these refugee camps.

This is the first of a series of regular informal reporting on the situation in camps around Athens. In this first instance, we'll delve a bit deeper into the background of each camp, then focus on the period January-March 2026.

Our next issue covering April-June 2026 period will focus on health conditions in the camps we visit.

TYPES OF ACCOMMODATION FACILITY

CAAFTAS: Controlled Access Facility for Temporary Accommodation of Asylum Seekers, the official name for what we call refugee camps in mainland Greece. In this report we'll use the term **camp** to refer to such structures.

CCAC: Closed and Controlled Access Centre, the official name for the camps of 5 Eastern Aegean Islands: Samos, Chios, Leros, Kos and Lesbos. The camp in Lesbos is not open yet.

RIC: Reception and Identification Centre, special centres which are now the only places for lodging asylum applications on the Greek mainland. Near Athens, the RIC is located in Malakasa. Two others are active in northern Greece, one in Diavata near Thessaloniki and one in Fylakio near the border with Turkey.

REFUGEE CAMPS: A BACKGROUND

It is now 10 years since the Greek reception system, consisting of refugee camps on both the Greek mainland and the Eastern Islands, has been put in place. What was born as a temporary response between late 2015 and early 2016 is now a permanent feature of the Greek countryside.

Since 2022 asylum seekers on the mainland must lodge their application in an Reception and Identification Centre (RIC). While waiting for their appointment to receive the ausweiss or "red card", certifying their status as asylum seekers, they are not allowed to leave the RIC facilities. Theoretically, this de facto detention period should not exceed 25 days, but in reality the lack of capacity of processing the requests does not ensure that these limits are respected.

Upon receiving their "red card", asylum seekers are assigned to an Accommodation Facility. There is no alternative accommodation offered to asylum seekers.

Camps have become part and parcel of a mechanism of division, control and deterrence. Perimeter walls, access by turnstiles and x-ray scanners, 24/7 private security, cameras, population counts: camps are open-air prisons, where the lack of services, the isolation and the harshness of conditions are essential to the authorities policy of deterrence -policies that have long been proven ineffective, other than inhumane.



image: a protest in February 2025 from the residents of Oinofyta camp complaining of extended delays in their asylum cases and abysmal living conditions inside the camp. Dimitra Margariti

Whilst camps may have been a necessary temporary response at a time of “emergency”, there is absolutely no reason to keep using such structures as accommodation facilities.

Since 2021/22, entry and exit from camps has become strictly regulated, for both residents and people working in solidarity.

None of the organisations writing this report has access inside the camps. We work instead from outside the camps or in nearby structures. Due to lack of funding and government policies, the number of organisations working in solidarity with people stuck in these camps has drastically decreased over the last years.

MALAKASA (RIC & CAFTAAS)



38°14'17.8"N 23°46'50.7"E (CAFTAAS)

38°14'39.7"N 23°47'14.5"E (RIC)



**Nominal Capacity: 3471 – Actual Capacity: 2554
Residents: 2250**



The CAFTAAS is located 10 minutes' walk from the train station of Sfendali. The RIC is a 10-15 minute walk further away in the direction of Oropos.



There is a large car park in front of the entrance of the CAFTAAS; expect camp security to come checking and asking for car registration number and organisation's name.



A quieter wooded area can be found near the closest roundabout, however police have been known to shut down larger gatherings there.



Sama Community Centre opened in 2025, very close to the train station.



40km North of Athens.



Train Athens-Sfendali: 40 minutes, € 3,70



Taxi from central Athens: € 50

In Malakasa, there are two structures in one. The first is a Registration and Identification Centre (RIC), the other one is the camp where people stay while their asylum claim is processed.

In 2025, there have been several protests at the camp, due to the sudden relocation of many of its residents to other camps in Greece, often including people with active work commitments in the area and with little to no notice or communication.

In July 2025, a young man from Egypt who lived in the camp committed suicide near the Sfendali train Station. [1] It barely made the news.

In the first months of 2026, the international NGO Eurorelief completed works on the accommodation facilities within the Safe Zone in the RIC, a space dedicated to unaccompanied minors. At the same time, local NGO Vela revealed that IOM has not been paying the organisation's staff for over 3 months. [2]

Bad housing conditions are reported frequently, as well as severe bug infestations all over the camp.





38°19'24.8"N 23°37'08.7"E



Nominal Capacity: 412 – Actual Capacity: 408

Residents: 268



The camp is located 20 minutes walk from the train station of Oinoi and 60km north of Athens.



The camp opens up on the busy road between Athens and Chalkida. There's very little space for meeting people in front of the camp, with a small carpark on the other side of the road that is often full.



Quieter and less controlled areas can be found on the south side of the camp and behind the Ravago factory in the vicinity of the camp.



Train Athens-Oinoi: 60 minutes, € 4,90



Taxi from central Athens: € 70

Oinofyta is located 20 km further north of Malakasa and it is also connected by train to Athens. The camp is inside an old factory and its surrounding grounds.

In 2023, former residents of the evicted self-managed camp in Lavrio were moved here, and until very recently, still made up some of the camp's population.

Gates for pedestrians and cars are controlled by security staff. Previously the camp was only surrounded by a fence, however, as of early April 2026, the construction of a new wall has almost been completed.

In February, 15 Kurdish families made a protest to bring attention to the unliveable conditions in the camp, the unfair treatment suffered at the hands of the camp management and the long delays in their asylum procedures. A few of them also undertook a 3-day hunger strike.

While some families have been waiting for a response to their claim for almost 2 years, the conditions inside the camp have become increasingly unbearable. Initially, camp management responded to their complaints with violence and threats, but in the end most protestors were able to formally plead their case and reached an agreement to temporarily suspended the hunger strike for a month, waiting to see improvements to their conditions and to receive a response from the asylum office. Shortly afterwards, many of the families finally received a positive decision on their asylum case. However for others the situation remains far from solved. [3]



 **38°23'20.3"N 23°30'15.8"E**



Nominal Capacity: 3036 – Actual Capacity: 1268
Residents: 1535



The camp is located on the Thiva-Chalkida road, 20km east of Chalkida and 75km north of Athens. The closest bus stop is 20 minutes' walk away



The camp opens up onto a busy road. There is very little space for meeting people nearby the camp. Expect security to come checking.



A quieter and less controlled area can be found further west towards Chalkida, 5 minutes walk from the camp entrance.



Very recently the bus line from Thiva to Athens (KTEL Thiva) has started stopping a 25-minute walk from Ritsona Camp a few times a day: 90 minutes, €6.70



Taxi from central Athens: €80

Further north of Oinofyta and Malakasa, Ritsona is located within former military grounds. It is the largest camp on the mainland. A road passes right in front of the camp and it is surrounded by industry. People enter through an electronic turnstile, and all belongings are X-ray scanned.

For about a year, public transportation had been interrupted, but towards the end of 2025 the bus route Athens-Thiva, passing through Ritsona, resumed its activities. The bus stop to reach Thiva is around 700m away from the camp, while the bus stop to reach Athens is around 2,6 km.

Especially (but not exclusively) for the people residing in Ritsona, the interruption of the cash card assistance constitutes a real barrier to movement. Instead of ensuring transportation for asylum interview appointments, the response of the Asylum service has been to start to hold interviews remotely, with both interviewers and translators on the other side of the screen from the person seeking asylum, affecting the quality of the interview.



THIVA



38°23'20.3"N 23°30'15.8"E



Nominal Capacity: 1014 – Actual Capacity: 828
Residents: 554



The camp is located on the Elefsina-Thiva road, 5km South of Thiva and 75km north of Athens. The closest bus stop is 20 minutes' walk away.



The camp opens up onto the busy road. There is very little space for meeting people nearby the camp. Expect security to come checking.



A quieter and less controlled area can be found in the parking lot on the other side of the road or along the north side of the camp.



Athens is connected to Thiva town by bus. The bus station is 5km from the camp. Most people walk over one hour to the station or pay for a taxi into town costing €9,70.



Taxi from Central Athens: €80

Built on the grounds of a disused factory, the accommodation in Thiva is partly within the industrial building, partly in containers. Starting from the last months of 2025, the camp saw its perimeter wall being built and it was completed in February 2026. A vehicle gate and pedestrian turnstile entrance is being built as of March 2026. There is a busy highway right in front of the camp and it is surrounded by factories.

Children living in Thiva do not grow according to their age and healthy development, many of them even lose weight while living in Thiva. Women report malnutrition and hair loss. Both formula and diapers for babies are lacking.

Psychological and other medical needs of people living in Thiva are not met sufficiently.

On more than one occasion, camp medical staff refused to call for an ambulance in case of emergency.

Women have reported being sent away from Thiva hospital when they did not have a referral document from the camp doctor.

SCHISTO



38°23'20.3"N 23°30'15.8"E



**Nominal Capacity: 1551 – Actual Capacity: 1017
Residents: 513**



The only camp still located within Greater Athens. It is located off the Schisto-Skaramangas Road, near the Schisto cemetery.



The camp opens onto a relatively quiet road, so it is possible to park near the entrance of the camp.



The camp is served by the 860 and 819 bus lines, connecting it with Perama and Palio Faliro. The stop is in front of the camp. The 871 (Pireaus-Elefsina) bus line also stops. Travelling to central Athens takes at least 1 hour.



Taxi from central Athens: €25

Schisto camp is located about 17 km from the city center of Athens, just above the commercial port of Perama and next to the Schisto Cemetery. Like the other camps, it has a strong presence of young Sudanese men. Most of them did not travel through the Libya route but arrived via Turkey, crossing to the nearby Greek islands, and then being moved here for the duration of their application.

However, none of the organizations in our network go there regularly, and we are not currently able to provide specific information on the dynamics of the camp.

GENERAL UPDATES & REFERENCES

DEMOGRAPHICS

Neither the Migration and Asylum Ministry, nor the large intergovernmental agencies that are active within the camps (IOM, EEUU, UNHCR) publish data on the demography or the living conditions within Greek refugee camps.

Here, we have been using the figures for 31 December 2025, published by Refugee Support Aegean (RSA), and obtained through Parliamentary questions. They also published data on the occupancy and the demographics within each camp:

<https://rsaegean.org/en/asylum-procedure-and-reception-statistics-in-greece-in-2025/>

HUNGER STRIKES

In December 2025 and February 2026, hundreds of Sudanese people in refugee camps across Greece went on hunger strike to protest the criminalisation of migrants on smuggling charges.

As the collective Mataris denounced: "2,400 refugees are imprisoned in Greece as a direct result of EU policies designed to target people seeking refuge (...) Trials last on average around 10 minutes with no consideration given to the circumstances in which people have come to Europe. Many children are convicted as the court doesn't accept birth certificates and rely on inaccurate wrist exams to estimate their age." [4]

LACK OF CLOTHING AND DISTRIBUTION MECHANISMS

During the winter months, most of the people we met outside of the camps were wearing inadequate clothes for the frigid temperatures.

They were only using the one change of clothes they received when they first arrived in Malakasa RIC, some what they travelled with from Libya. Some weren't even given bedding or blankets when their caravan in the new CAFTAA camp was assigned.

Grassroot organizations attempted to bridge the gap by organizing clothes distribution outside of some of the camps.

REFERENCES

[1] <https://www.zougla.gr/greece/vrethike-kremasmenos-metanastis-se-apothiki-konta-sti-domi-tis-malakasas/>

[2] <https://www.documentonews.gr/article/galera-sto-kyt-tis-malakasas-ston-aera-ergazomenoi-kai-anilika-paidia/>

[3] <https://www.news247.gr/magazine/reportage/xreiazomaste-voitheia-prosfiges-katangelloun-athlies-sinthikes-sti-domi-oinofiton/>

[4] <https://www.instagram.com/p/DUREK66iPch/>